

Defence

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MR COLES

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Nuclear Defence Policy - Arms Control

--- I attach a copy of a note of the discussion that took place at Chequers last Sunday on this subject.

2. Copies of this minute and the attachment go also to Brian Fall and Richard Mottram.

R P HATFIELD

1st February 1983

SECRET

Note of a discussion at Chequers on Sunday
30th January 1983 at 10.30 am

Nuclear Defence Policy - Arms Control

The Prime Minister held a discussion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence; also present were Sir Julian Bullard, Mr Wright and Mr Gillmore (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), the Chief of the Defence Staff, Mr Whitmore, Mr Blelloch and Colonel Cross (Ministry of Defence); Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr Goodall and Mr Facer (Cabinet Office) and Mr Butler, Mr Coles and Mr Jackling (Prime Minister's Office).

2. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave an account of the background to the current Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) negotiations and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) at Geneva, the present state of the negotiations and possible ways in which they might be carried forward. The meeting also considered the line to be taken on arms control with the Federal German Chancellor, Dr Kohl, during his visit to London on 4th February and with the Vice President of the United States, Mr Bush, during his visit on 9th February.

3. The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that in public presentation of the need for the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles the emphasis should be placed on the role of the weapons (and of nuclear weapons generally) in deterring war rather than in their ability to destroy particular targets if deterrence failed. It would be helpful to have the arguments set down in a form which Ministers could use in Parliament. It was also important to make it clear to the public that it was the Soviet Side, not the Americans, which has put an end to the exploratory contacts between the Heads of the United States and Soviet Delegations to the INF talks at Geneva, Mr Nitze and Mr Utsinsky, which had pointed to the possibilities of an interim agreement. It was clearly the Soviet tactic to make no early move in the negotiations in the hope that public opinion in the West would make concessions on their part unnecessary. Dr Kohl,

would be seeing the United States Vice President, Mr Bush, later that day and on 31st January and 1st February. It was not clear what view the German Government collectively took on the timing of any change in the United States negotiating position in the INF talks: The Foreign Minister, Herr Genscher, and the Leader of the Christian Social Union, Herr Strauss, appeared to hold different views from those of Dr Kohl. While it seemed that some of Dr Kohl's advisers were not in favour of any move away from the "zero option" before the German Elections on 6th March, political pressures in Germany might force him to change his position during the Election campaign. If the United States did not show signs of flexibility soon, Western public opinion could increasingly turn against them. It was in the United Kingdom's interest that there should be a fairly early initiative by the United States to seek an interim agreement whereby limited reductions on the Soviet Side would be balanced by reduced deployments on the part of the United States, without abandoning the "zero option" as the ultimate aim. Rather than sending a message in this sense to reach Dr Kohl before he saw Mr Bush, it would be better to explain these considerations to Dr Kohl personally when he visited London. In the light of the discussions with Dr Kohl, she would tell Mr Bush that the credibility of the United States negotiating position could be put at risk, with serious effects on the cohesion of the Alliance, if the United States did not take a new initiative in the INF negotiations in the direction she had indicated. She would also register with him the Government's wish to be kept fully informed on the progress of the START negotiations.

4. The meeting -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide briefing material to the Prime Minister on:-

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- (a) the value in deterrent terms of stationing long-range nuclear theatre forces in Europe;
 - (b) the background to the Soviet decision to end the exploratory talks between the leaders of the United States and Soviet Delegations to the INF negotiations;
 - (c) the latest position on the comprehensive test-ban treaty negotiations, developments in chemical warfare, and the recent Soviet proposals for a nuclear free zone.